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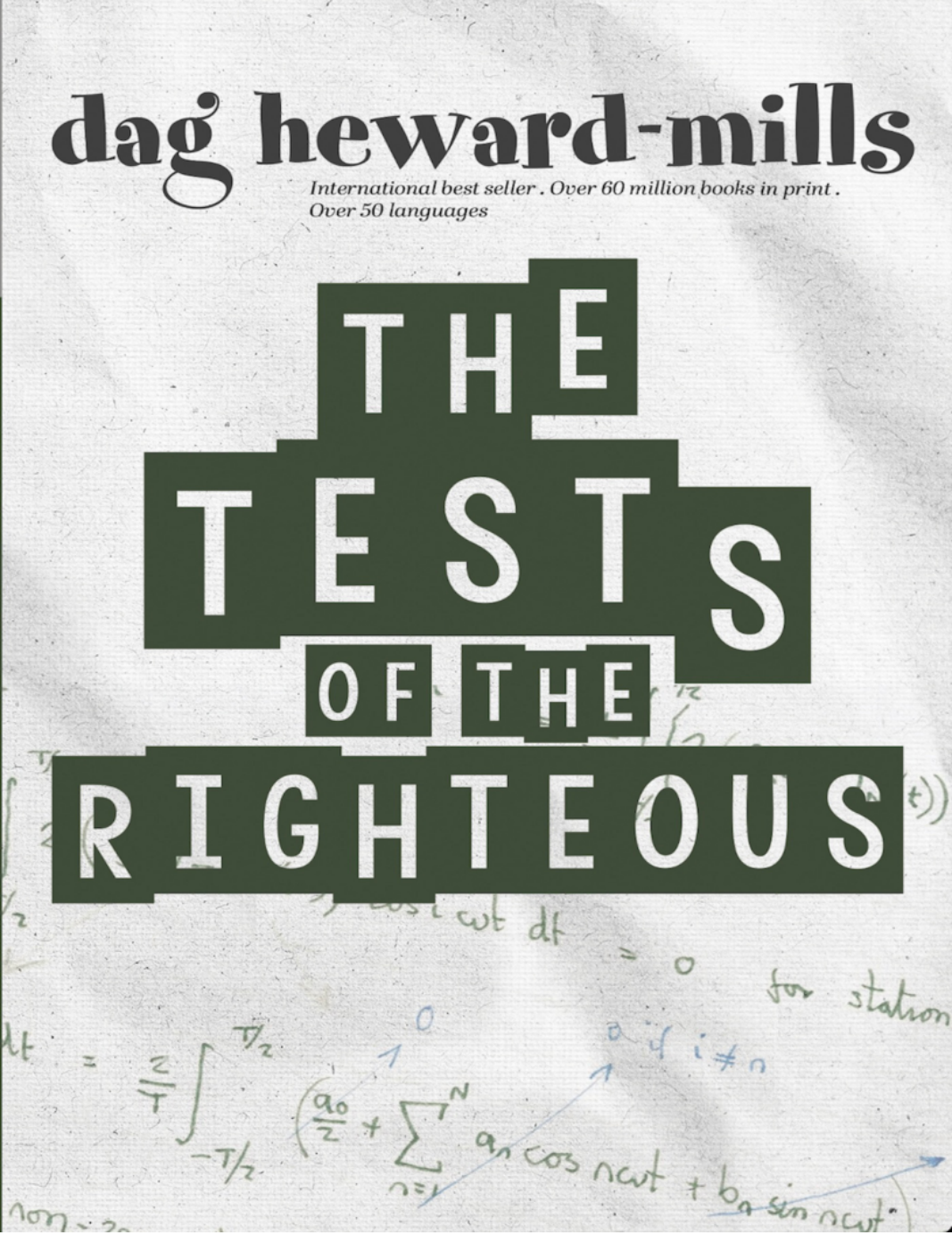
THE TESTS OF THE RIGHTEOUS



The Tests of the Righteous

Dag Heward-Mills

Parchment House

Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

The Tests of the Righteous

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First published 2025 by Parchment House

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ISBN :

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Contents

1. The Tests of the Righteous
2. The Test of Marah
3. The Test of War
4. The Test of the Sabbath
5. The Test of the Manna
6. The Test of Mount Sinai
7. The Test of the Wilderness
8. The Test of the Slanderer

Chapter 1
The Tests of the Righteous

YET, LORD OF ARMIES, WHO TESTS THE RIGHTEOUS, Who sees the mind and the heart; Let me see Your vengeance on them, For to You I have disclosed my cause.

Jeremiah 20:12 (NASB)

This book is to reveal to you that righteous people are subject to special testing, temptations and trials.

One would have thought that tests are reserved for the wicked and the disobedient. But no! The tests of the righteous do not happen because you are a bad person. God has tests reserved for you, JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE A RIGHTEOUS MAN!

THE LORD TESTS THE RIGHTEOUS and the wicked, And His soul hates one who loves violence.

Psalm 11:5 (NASB)

These tests do not happen because you have sinned or are disobedient. The tests of the righteous happen because you are a good person. The tests are happening because you are a righteous man. It is because you are on the path of righteousness that God has decided to test you.

Why would God do something like that and subject good people to tests?

1. The tests of the righteous will refine your mind and your heart.

Vindicate me, Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, And I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. EXAMINE ME, LORD, AND PUT ME TO THE TEST; REFINE MY MIND AND MY HEART. For Your goodness is before my eyes, And I have walked in Your truth.

Psalm 26:1-3 (NASB)

When a man of God is refined, he is a finer, more polished and more elegant version of his former self. To refine something is to improve it by inserting finer distinctions and superior elements into it. The scripture states clearly that tests serve to refine a person! Indeed, your righteous heart and mind will be refined as you keep passing the tests that are

destined for the righteous!

2. The tests of the righteous will refine you like silver.

For YOU HAVE PUT US TO THE TEST, GOD; YOU HAVE REFINED US AS SILVER IS REFINED.

Psalm 66:10 (NASB)

Silver refining is typically the final process in the production of high-purity silver, suitable for sale in the market. The refining of silver is associated with purity and typically needs to meet a minimum of 99.9% purity units. In most cases, 99.99% purity is required, and in other cases, 99.999% purity is required, depending on the end-use.

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Psalm 12:6

The number "seven" in Scripture represents "perfection," "finished," or "complete." Typically, refining silver once, leaves it fairly pure. If you were refining silver and repeated the process seven times, it would become wholly pure. Seven times refining refers to the intensely pure standard that God is bringing you to.

3. The tests of the righteous will refine you like gold.

But He knows the way I take; WHEN HE HAS PUT ME TO THE TEST, I WILL COME OUT AS GOLD.

Job 23:10 (NASB)

What does it mean that God refines us like gold? How is gold purified by fire? Indeed, the value of gold is realised when gold is purer. Therefore, the goldsmith has to refine the ore first.

Gold melts at around 1000 degrees Celsius. Gold is very dense, so the impurities tend to come to the surface as the gold melts. Those impurities are then scraped off, and the gold is cooled. Through the process of burning and heating with fire, the gold comes out purer and much more valuable.

That is how you come out of the fires of testing. You come out purer and more valuable!

1. Refining you as gold means you will come out of your tests purer. When you are refined as gold, the impurities in your life come floating upwards and away from you.

2. Refining you as gold means you will come out more valuable. The purer the gold is, the more valuable it is!

3. Gold is a "noble" metal, meaning that it does not rust or lose its shine. When you are refined as gold, you will never be corrupted or lose your shine.

4. Gold is the only yellow metal. When you are refined as gold, you become a unique, one-of-a-kind servant of God.

5. Gold is one of the heaviest and densest of all metals in the Periodic Table; a cubic foot weighs more than half a ton. When you are refined gold, you are weighty! To be as weighty as gold is to become very important and to exert influence.

6. Pure gold melts at 1064.43°C and boils at 2856.1 °C. When you are refined as gold, it will be almost impossible to destroy you. A temperature of 2856 degrees Celsius is needed to make you boil, and that temperature is very difficult to attain.

There are seven tests that you will encounter as a servant of God. Expect to experience all these seven tests of the righteous: the test of Marah, the test of war, the test of the Sabbath, the test of manna, the test of Mount Sinai, the test of the wilderness and the test of the slanderer. Understand each of the tests of the righteous and overcome them all.

Chapter 2
The Test of Marah

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. WHEN THEY CAME TO MARAH, THEY COULD NOT DRINK THE WATERS OF MARAH, BECAUSE THEY WERE BITTER; for that reason it was named Marah. So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" Then he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, AND THERE HE TESTED THEM.

Exodus 15:22-25 (NASB)

What is the Test of Marah?

The test of Marah is the test of life's bitter experiences. The test of Marah comes early in life, because the bitterness and disappointments of life start quite early.

The test of Marah will often differentiate people quite early in the race of life. This is because the bitterness of life happens so early that two groups soon emerge: grateful, happy, flowing people and the discontented, unhappy, murmurers.

The murmurers start to fail after Marah, whilst the thankful and grateful start rising after the test of Marah.

1. Marah is an experience that affects your whole life.

> **Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.**
>
> **John 4:13-14**

Jesus said, "Whoever drinks this water shall have life." Water represents life! All through the universe, water represents life! No water, no life!

God brought the people to drink water and to test them with water. Water represents life! Therefore, the test of Marah is your test at the waters of life on this earth! It is a test of the things that happen in life. This life is full of

bitter experiences, pain, hurts and disappointments. These real-life experiences constitute your test at the waters of Marah.

2. A test of Marah is an experience God Himself leads you to.

God is the one who brought the Israelites to Marah. It was not the devil who brought them to Marah. It was not demons that brought the Israelites to the bitter waters of Marah. It was the Holy Spirit who led them there. At Marah, you will not even be able to blame yourself for what has happened. God is the one who brought you straight to the bitter waters of Marah!

3. A test of Marah is a test of your responses to bitter experiences.

There are many tests of disappointment and disillusionment! Many things happen to your heart when things are not as they should be. My father once told me, "It's not as it seems." I realised later that he was trying to tell me something important.

People who are disappointed are unhappy. Someone becomes bitter, angry and unhappy because he cannot forget bad things that have happened in the past. Some people are bitter because they simply cannot overcome their memories from childhood. Some cannot forget what they have been through and simply fail the tests of life.

On the other hand, some people suffer terribly over the years, but do not become bitter.

Men are going to fail you! Expect it! That is the test of Marah. That is the test of bitter experiences in life and ministry.

There will be disappointments! There will be disappointments in business, in marriage, in church, in leadership, in friendships and in life. Bitter experiences are just ahead in your walk with God. It is God who is taking you there and not the devil!

Marah is a test of your reactions and responses to life! A test of Marah is a test of this life's experiences. There are many bitter experiences in this life. Treachery and betrayal are bitter experiences. The deaths of loved ones are bitter experiences. Marriage has many bitter life experiences. Financial realities of life have many bitter experiences embedded in them. *Marah is a test of your reactions and responses to life's bitterness!*

Life is full of many bitter experiences, and people react differently to bitter experiences! Some turn out to be terrible husbands or evil wives as a result of their poor reactions to the realities of life. Such people are failing badly at the test of Marah.

Some people become traitors when they are tested with life. Some people

become thieves when tested with the bitter tests of lack and poverty. At the waters of Marah, the sheep are separated from the goats. The bad attitudes are separated from the good attitudes in the waters of Marah! And it is Almighty God Himself who brings you to the test of Marah to see what is in you.

Chapter 3
The Test of War

I IN TURN WILL NO LONGER DRIVE OUT FROM THEM ANY OF THE NATIONS WHICH JOSHUA LEFT WHEN HE DIED, IN ORDER TO TEST ISRAEL BY THEM, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk in it as their fathers did, or not. So the Lord allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not hand them over to Joshua.

Judges 2:21-23 (NASB)

Now these are the nations that the Lord left, to test Israel by them (that is, all the Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan; ONLY IN ORDER THAT THE GENERATIONS OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL MIGHT BE TAUGHT WAR, those who had not experienced it previously). These nations are: the five governors of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians, and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. THEY WERE LEFT TO TEST ISRAEL BY THEM, TO FIND OUT IF THEY WOULD OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses.

Judges 3:1-4 (NASB)

The scripture above is very clear as to why God did not wipe out all the enemies before Israel. The test of war is when God allows undefeated enemies to flourish around you so you can have someone to spar with.

God wants His people to grow up and learn how to fight and how to survive. God will allow some enemies to remain so you can have someone to fight with. This is the reason why your enemies are not simply struck down when they show up.

Today, every nation that has not been to war before has a “theoretical armed force”, which is probably more of a police force than a military one. An army that lacks experience is an army in theory. An armed force which has never been threatened, lacks something.

What is the Effect of the Test of War?

1. The test of war brings out your strengths.

So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them. And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Benhadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse with the horsemen. And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter. And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, GO, STRENGTHEN THYSELF, AND MARK, AND SEE WHAT THOU DOEST: FOR AT THE RETURN OF THE YEAR THE KING OF SYRIA WILL COME UP AGAINST THEE. And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.

1 Kings 20:19-23

The Syrians felt that the Israelites would be weak in the plains because the Israelites seemed more confident and stronger in the hills.

You must allow your enemies to show you what to work on and how to develop the undeveloped aspects of your ministry. There will be great improvements, modifications and adjustments to your life and ministry as you take seriously the threats that come to you from your undefeated enemies.

Everybody has weaknesses. Everyone has undeveloped areas of ministry. War with your undefeated enemies will help you to see your weaknesses. War is good because it tests all the weaknesses you have and shows you clearly what you need to work on.

God allows certain wars in your life, not because you have sinned, but because He wants you to develop all the weak aspects of your ministry.

2. The test of war cures passivity.

Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

Jeremiah 48:10

During the war, you will be forced to give all you can. Passivity and half-heartedness will be cured by the war itself. War is good because of what it brings out in you. Having enemies is good because it intensifies your drive and cures your phlegmatic personality and passivity. Passivity is permanently cured by the presence of a threatening enemy. Enemies wake up sleeping giants! Enemies make you active! Enemies make you have meetings! Enemies get you into the war mode!

3. The test of war draws new followers and new support.

The greater the number and quality of formidable enemies you have, the greater the support you will generate. Indeed, the more you have enemies, the greater the influence you wield.

4. The test of war exposes hidden enemies.

War causes traitors to be exposed! War exposes the presence of unfaithful and disloyal men. When our church was attacked by rebels, all the silently disloyal people came out of the woods and expressed their support for our enemies. I was happy to see the end of all these hidden moles and enemies around me. War is good because it uncovers the devils in your midst.

5. The test of war exposes the unthankful and the ungrateful.

> **Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, NEITHER WERE THANKFUL; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.**
>
> **Romans 1:21-23**

War exposes murmurers and complainers. War makes disgruntled employees pop out of the woodwork. Unthankfulness reveals monsters. All kinds of evil are created by the unthankful and the wicked. War brings out the worst in men.

6. The test of war brings out your patience and faith in God.

> **And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? WHO IS ABLE TO MAKE WAR WITH HIM? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. HERE IS THE PATIENCE AND**

Revelation 13:4-10

The beast made war against the saints, but God allowed the beast and the dragon to prevail against the saints. Why is that? God wanted to bring out two great qualities in His people: faith and patience. The test of war brings out patience in you because it takes years to win some wars. The test of war also brings out your faith in God. There are many wars which need the help of God in a real way.

Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

Psalm 35:1

For you to win certain wars, God must fight against those who fight against you. If God withholds His hand in war, your enemy will prevail against you.

7. The test of war is a test of maturity.

Maturity comes when you survive treachery and betrayal. Betrayal is the most difficult thing to overcome. War is all about surviving the wickedness of people who pretend to be with you but are not. Treachery will make you "spiritually dizzy" and emotionally unstable.

War is good and enemies are necessary to make you mature. Jesus handled the betrayal of Judas with such calmness, knowing that Judas was just an accursed and doomed man. Jesus also handled the betrayal of Peter and the other disciples with great maturity and continued to work with them in spite of their mistakes. Jesus was not destroyed or defeated by betrayal and desertion. He handled it well and overcame all!

Those who are negatively affected by war and treachery become:

a. Constantly uncertain

b. Constantly hopeless

c. Constantly indifferent

d. Constantly emotionally flat

e. Constantly paranoid

f. Constantly prejudiced

g. Constantly vindictive

War will make you experience all the feelings above, but you will have to overcome them all.

War causes people to be constantly uncertain and constantly hopeless. This is because war is genuinely depressing. After the Second World War, Winston Churchill, Britain's Prime Minister at the time, told Billy Graham, a famous American evangelist, that he had no hope for this world! It is normal to feel hopeless after a war.

War makes you not care anymore until you become emotionally flat. War makes people constantly afraid that something terrible is going to happen. Many seasoned warriors are paranoid and even vindictive because they have been in wars. God allows you to go through wars so that you experience all these feelings.

Chapter 4
The Test of the Sabbath

Then the Lord said to Moses, "BEHOLD, I WILL RAIN BREAD FROM HEAVEN FOR YOU; AND THE PEOPLE SHALL GO OUT AND GATHER A DAY'S PORTION EVERY DAY, SO THAT I MAY TEST THEM, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." So Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, "At evening you will know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt; and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, for He hears your grumblings against the Lord; and what are we, that you grumble against us?"

Exodus 16:4-7 (NASB)

The test of the Sabbath is a test of your ability to trust God and to be able to rest in Him. Your ability to rest and to trust is important in your service to God.

1. The test of the Sabbath brings out your WILLINGNESS TO TRUST MORE IN GOD THAN IN YOUR WORK.

But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: IN IT THOU SHALT NOT DO ANY WORK, THOU, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

Exodus 20:10

Indeed, it takes faith to believe that God will take care of you even when you do not work.

2. The test of the Sabbath brings out your WILLINGNESS TO REST.

And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, TOMORROW IS THE REST OF THE HOLY SABBATH unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.

Exodus 16:23

Many people cannot sit idle without working. They must work, work, work. It is not restful to be with such people. You must find time to rest.

3. The test of the Sabbath brings out your WILLINGNESS TO BE HOLY AND SPECIAL.

> **Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day THERE SHALL BE TO YOU AN HOLY DAY, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.**
>
> **Exodus 35:2**

"Holy" means "special for a purpose." Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the Jews today is their holy observance of the Sabbath. Experiencing the Sabbath on a Saturday and refusing, worldwide, to do any work on that holy day has separated the Jews from every other nation and kept them as a holy, special people.

The test of the Sabbath brings out your willingness to be different and special to God. It brings out your ability to be different, odd and unique for God's sake. Are you ready to be different because of your calling to God's work?

4. The test of the Sabbath brings out your WILLINGNESS TO BE OBEDIENT.

> **But the children rebelled against me: They did not follow my decrees, they were not careful to keep my laws, of which I said, "THE PERSON WHO OBEYS THEM WILL LIVE BY THEM," AND THEY DESECRATED MY SABBATHS. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness.**
>
> **Ezekiel 20:21 (NIV)**

The test of the Sabbath reveals whether you are obedient or not. An obedient person has many blessings, but disobedience brings in the curse. There are many logical reasons to disobey the Sabbath. Today, many nations have no Sabbath whatsoever. Shops and businesses are open and fully operational for seven consecutive days a week. God will bless you when you pass the test of keeping His Sabbath.

Chapter 5
The Test of the Manna

In the wilderness it was He WHO FED YOU MANNA WHICH YOUR FATHERS DID NOT KNOW, IN ORDER TO HUMBLE YOU AND IN ORDER TO PUT YOU TO THE TEST, to do good for you in the end.

Deuteronomy 8:16 (NASB)

And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; tgggvuajake ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating. And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.

Exodus 16:15-29

God gave the children of Israel manna every day. Why did He do this? He wanted them to learn to come to Him EVERY DAY for sustenance.

This is why the manna stank when the children of Israel took more than they needed for one day. God wanted the people to come to Him every day. This is one of the greatest tests for all Christians and pastors. Do you go to God every day? Or do you just go to God when you are going to preach?

The test of the manna was given to see if man would depend on God's word every single day. The test of the manna was given to see if man would love God every single day.

However, most humans do not want to see God or meet Him every day. Most Christians do not have a daily quiet time with God. But God wants to fellowship with us every day through His daily Word. What a difference there would be if we could only get a word from the Lord every day!

1. The test of manna is a test of daily light.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 8:12

Do you have light daily for this life? Do you know the way to go? You need a daily light! When a man gropes about in darkness, he often hurts himself by bumping awkwardly into hard and painful objects. How painful it is to hit your shin against a table! The pains and hurts we experience in our lives are because we have not taken the light of the Word as our daily guide.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Psalm 119:105

There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.

Psalm 132:17

What is this lamp that God has specially prepared for His anointed ones? It is the Word of God! The test of the daily manna is a test of your commitment to a daily, quality quiet time with God, where He speaks

to you. That is why the Lord gave the children of Israel manna every day; to make them dependent on a daily Word from God.

2. The test of manna is a test of investment.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Galatians 6:8

A daily, good-quality quiet time guarantees a good daily investment in yourself. This is because a daily quiet time is the sowing of spiritual seeds into your spirit. The word of God is the great seed that you plant in your heart when you have a quiet time.

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

Luke 8:11

The seed of the word of God will yield good fruit in your life and ministry. Just as a word from God could cause a man to be born again and be changed, a daily word from God can bring about great changes to your life.

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

1 Peter 1:23

3. The test of manna is a test of fire.

Wherefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I WILL MAKE MY WORDS IN THY MOUTH FIRE, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

Jeremiah 5:14

Some things can only be removed by a daily fire. The word of God is a fire. A daily manna is a dose of the daily fire! The daily manna lights a daily fire which burns away many undesirable things. When this fire is kindled daily, no evil can remain as part of your character. A daily dose of that fire will take care of every unwanted element in your life and ministry.

4. The test of manna is a test of the hammer.

Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

A hammer is a tool for breaking things down. It breaks down all hard and resistant objects. In the same way, daily manna ensures that there are regular blows against resistant ideas and obstinate views. Because the daily manna leads to the breaking of evil things in our lives, a Christian who does not have quiet times often has a bad character. The strongholds in the lives of most Christians cannot be broken away by one powerful sermon. They need constant hammering. Anyone who does not have a regular quiet time has a lot of things in their character that may need to be broken down.

5. The test of manna is a test of the sword.

> **For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**
>
> **Hebrews 4:12**

A daily manna leads to the daily cutting away of unwanted aspects of our lives and character. The test of manna is the test of the daily sword. Will you allow the sword to swing and cut through every unwanted thing in your life?

You will notice that Christians who just listen to sermons on Sundays, but have no regular cutting away of evil things, are very different people from those who receive the daily manna.

6. The test of manna is the test of growth.

Daily manna is daily spiritual food. Obedience to the manna will daily ensure you have good spiritual food like milk, bread, meat, fruit and honey.

a. MILK

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

1 Peter 2:2

b. BREAD

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:4

c. MEAT

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Hebrews 5:12

d. HONEY

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalm 119:103

Churches today have thousands of undeveloped spiritual babies because they do not have a daily quiet time.

Every Christian must pass the test of the daily manna and enjoy real daily spiritual growth before it is too late.

Chapter 6
The Test of Mount Sinai

And all the people were watching and hearing the thunder and the lightning flashes, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it all, they trembled and stood at a distance. Then they said to Moses, "SPEAK TO US YOURSELF AND WE WILL LISTEN; BUT DO NOT HAVE GOD SPEAK TO US, OR WE WILL DIE!" However, Moses said to the people, "DO NOT BE AFRAID; FOR GOD HAS COME IN ORDER TO TEST YOU, AND IN ORDER THAT THE FEAR OF HIM MAY REMAIN WITH YOU, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT SIN." So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

Exodus 20:18-21 (NASB)

Mount Sinai represents one of the saddest events to have ever occurred on earth! It represents the day that people rejected closeness to God! It represents the day that people did not want to see or hear from God Himself! It represents the day that humans rejected the presence of God and rejected a direct, personal interaction with God. These Israelites did not want to meet God themselves. They told Moses to deal with God on their behalf.

Perhaps, this event offended God so much that He rarely gives visions of His glory and holy Throne Room any more. Indeed, it is so difficult and so rare to have deep experiences of God Almighty today. Perhaps God has not forgotten how the Israelites rejected His presence. Let's pray to be close to God! Our very lives depend on this closeness to the Lord.

Just wanting a pastor to meet God on your behalf is as offensive as the Israelites not wanting to speak to God.

I have had people who did not want to meet me but wanted to meet my assistant or someone else. They had heard various things about me and felt they didn't want to meet me. That was offensive to me. It is distasteful when you refuse to meet an important person. "We don't want to see him. We want to meet someone else." "We are okay with another person."

The test of Mount Sinai is where you are tested on whether you want to be close to God or not. Many people do not value closeness to God. That is a colossal mistake. God will test whether you desire to be close to Him. God

will test you on whether you will pay the price to be close to Him or not.

Those who are close to God are those who make the effort to seek Him and find Him. The test of Mount Sinai is the test of whether you want to be close to God or not. The Israelites who came to Mount Sinai failed this test miserably! They wanted to see Moses but they didn't want to meet with God.

What Does the Test of Mount Sinai Entail?

1. The test of closeness is a test of your ability to draw near.

> **Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.**
>
> **James 4:8**

Some people simply cannot come close! By reflex, they just stay away from you. Some people, by reflex, take the furthest back seat in the auditorium. They are naturally tuned to stay away and to retreat from the light.

Are you like that? Learn from close people! Watch what they do to come close! Do not stay far away! Do not be one of the distant people who only say "hi" and "bye" all the time. There is an art to being close. Learn the art of being a close daughter or son.

2. The test of closeness is a test of survival.

> **FOR, LO, THEY THAT ARE FAR FROM THEE SHALL PERISH: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. BUT IT IS GOOD FOR ME TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.**
>
> **Psalm 73:27-28**

They that are far from thee shall perish! What a statement! Indeed, your closeness is a test of your ability to survive in life and ministry.

Fight to be close to God and to those who are important to your life. Closeness to the important people in your life is critical.

It is important to be close to God!

It is important to be close to your father!

It is important to be close to your pastor!

It is important to be close to God's servant!

They that are far from thee shall perish! Do you want to perish? Do you want to die? I'm sure you don't! Rise and do what it takes to be close to your God and to those who matter.

Do not be like the Israelites who said "We don't need or want to see God." Many people perish in their ministries because they draw away from closeness to God. It is good to be near God!

> **But as for me, THE NEARNESS OF GOD IS GOOD FOR ME; I have made the Lord God my refuge, So that I may tell of all Your works.**
>
> **Psalm 73:28 (NASB)**

Since nearness to God is a good thing, you must fight to have it. How do you know that you are close to God? You are close to God when you talk to Him all the time. You are close to anyone you talk to all the time.

Pray without ceasing and God will talk to you without ceasing!

3. The test of closeness is a test of sincerity.

> **And since we have a great priest over the house of God, LET US DRAW NEAR TO GOD WITH A SINCERE HEART AND WITH THE FULL ASSURANCE that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.**
>
> **Hebrews 10:21-22 (NIV)**

You cannot draw near to God without sincerity. God loves truth! God loves real things! Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart!

Sincerity speaks of freedom from deceit, hypocrisy, or duplicity. Sincerity is a type of truthfulness. Truth is essential if you are to draw close to God. Sincerity is essential! Inner truth is critical! Why is that? Because lies and deception are the hallmarks of the presence of devils.

You cannot go near God with the stains of deception and lies. As soon as you appear in the presence of God, you will smell of devils and it will not go well.

Get rid of hypocrisy because you cannot pretend to God! God is not a man that you can deceive easily.

I remember some of my pastors who tried so hard to deceive me. Indeed,

they succeeded, very much, for some time. Why were they so successful? They were successful at deceiving me because I am a man.

A man is easy to deceive but God is not so easy to deceive! Do not bother trying to come to God with your insincerity.

Get free of your deceit, your hypocrisy and your duplicity! God sees everything! It is time to be close to God. The nearness of God is a good thing!

4. The test of closeness is a test of apostleship.

> **Therefore this is what the Lord God says: "BEHOLD, I AM LAYING A STONE IN ZION, A TESTED STONE, A precious cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. The one who believes in it will not be disturbed.**
>
> **Isaiah 28:16 (NASB)**

The foundation of Zion is laid on a tested stone. The foundation of the church is also laid on a tested stone. A true apostle must be a well-tested stone. An apostle is a well-tested man. A man who lays a foundation must be well-tested. Paul was well-tested about his desire to be close to God! Paul revealed his true heart when he said he wanted to know God. Paul wrote half of the New Testament but still his great desire was to be close to God.

> **Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: THAT I MAY KNOW HIM, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;**
>
> **Philippians 3:8-10**

Paul's great apostleship in ministry was linked to his closeness to God. The book of Philippians outlines Paul's great commitment to knowing God and getting close to Him. We see a real apostle whose drive was not even to reach the world, but to attain a certain closeness to God!

I want to know God! I want to see God! I want to be found where He is!

What a vision! Few men of God have such clear spiritual goals of closeness

to God! It is time to renew your visions for life and ministry.

Do not run away from God! Run to Him! Come closer to Him. He will bless you with His presence! Don't fail the test of coming close to God.

5. The test of closeness is a test of a psalmist.

> **O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.**
>
> **Psalm 63:1-2**

Singing songs is not the same as desiring to see God. Singing songs and worshipping is not the same as genuinely longing for His presence. When we have worshippers who have the desire of King David to be close to God, we will see the beauty of His presence even more.

All true worship leaders are close to God. I have always wanted to be a worship leader. Worship and thanksgiving shoot you faster into God's presence than anything else.

Always remember how the Israelites offended God by not wanting to interact with Him personally! Always remember how the Israelites failed the test of Sinai!

Chapter 7
The Test of the Wilderness

All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, so that you may live and increase, and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord swore to give to your forefathers. And YOU SHALL REMEMBER ALL THE WAY WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD HAS LED YOU IN THE WILDERNESS THESE FORTY YEARS, IN ORDER TO HUMBLE YOU, PUTTING YOU TO THE TEST, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

Deuteronomy 8:1-2 (NASB)

Before you see the promised land of milk and honey, there is a wilderness for you to go through! This is one of the greatest tests of Israel, and it is one of the tests of the righteous.

In this wilderness test, the key lesson is in the area of humility. Without humility, you will not survive even one year in the wilderness.

In the wilderness, you have to accept lowness, lowliness of mind and subservience as a lifestyle. Without accepting to be a servant, you will not make it through the wilderness. God has milk and honey for everyone. You can have your share of God's glory, but before that, you must endure the harsh wilderness test of humility.

The wilderness is a place of shortages.

The wilderness is a place of heat.

The wilderness is a place of discomfort.

There are no soft cushions or air conditioners in the wilderness.

Lovers of themselves, lovers of comforts, and lovers of riches will not make it through a wilderness.

John the Baptist was a man of the wilderness! Jesus described him in a way that should make everyone understand what it means to be a man who survives the test of the wilderness.

And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes

concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

Matthew 11:7-9

By the time you come out of the wilderness test, you will no longer be a softy! You will no longer be bendable and shakeable by winds of change and the winds of public opinion!

1. The test of the wilderness is a test of humility.

For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.

Luke 22:27

The wilderness test is a test of humility!

In the wilderness, you cannot have all your comforts and little pleasures. God will take you through the test of becoming a servant and becoming a child again.

Most grown-ups cannot become children again. However, in your quest to become great servants of God, you will have to become a child again. It is this important devolution into childlikeness that is necessary for your ministry.

Also, you will have to become a servant to many. Jesus was a servant to us! He was amongst us as a servant - that is truly amazing! Yet, we want to be masters, lords and the first in everything. May God help us all to pass the test of humility!

The test of the wilderness is a test of humility!

2. The test of the wilderness is a test of obedience.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Genesis 2:16-17

It is important to pass the tests of obedience, which are all wrapped up in the test of the wilderness! If you are not obedient in small things and

in big things, you will not be able to survive the wilderness test.

In the wilderness, you will see and encounter many things which are dangerous and life-threatening.

In the wilderness, there will be small things like snakes, scorpions and food shortages.

In the wilderness, there will also be big things like armies of enemy nations attacking you and threatening your very existence.

You will notice that the Israelites had to obey God in small matters relating to food and water, and they also had to obey God in how to defeat the advancing armies of the Philistines and Amalekites.

Be obedient! Do not think too much before you obey! You will discover that your opinion is not so important in the scheme of things. Learn to love and obey and you will see great improvements and changes in your life!

3. The test of the wilderness is a test of time.

> **Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.**
>
> **Revelation 2:10**

There is a time for every test. No examination goes on endlessly. The test mentioned above in the Book of Revelations was a test that lasted only ten days. The wilderness test lasted forty years! Forty years is a long time to be tested.

There are tests from God that are simply a test of endurance - whether you can go the long haul or not! God will allow you to be tested with time and to see how long you can and will hold out in obedience. This is why you are encouraged to be faithful and obedient until death.

To be faithful for forty years means that you will have to endure something for your entire life, without any breaks or reliefs at all. That is what it means! Forty years is the lifetime of an adult. God Himself is allowing the test to carry on till your whole life is over.

Chapter 8
The Test of the Slanderer

THEN JESUS was led (guided) by the [Holy] Spirit into the wilderness (desert) to be TEMPTED (TESTED AND TRIED) BY THE DEVIL [*SLANDERER*].

Matthew 4:1 (AMPC)

The test of the slanderer is one of the principal tests of the righteous. Jesus was righteous but He was tested with the tests of a slanderer. The test of your encounter with a slanderer is one of the tests of a righteous person. Good people are slandered all the time! God's servants are slandered all the time! You will be slandered if you are working for God. Jesus was slandered terribly till He died on the cross.

Jesus endured the slanderer, and so will everyone who truly serves the Lord. It is a severe and painful test but you must pull through.

Jesus was tested by the devil (slanderer). The word "devil" in the verse above, is translated as "slanderer, traducer, speaking maliciously and falsely, a false accuser, accusing falsely, a calumniator and one who defames."

The test of a slanderer is to endure satan personified. A slanderer is an accuser. Satan is an accuser. A slanderer is someone who *attempts to discredit and damage a person by directly accusing him of many things. A slanderer will speak out many outrageous and preposterous accusations.*

One of the greatest tests of ministry is the test of enduring people who accuse you falsely or maliciously, and who spread wicked and malicious tales about you. This test is complicated. It has many aspects to it. The test of the slanderer is one of the principal tests of the righteous. At a certain level of ministry, you will be forced to go through the test of a slanderer.

What is the Test of a Slanderer?

1. **The test of a slanderer is the test of enduring a bitter personality who campaigns to lower the value and admiration that others have of you.**

To endure a slanderer is to endure a demon-possessed and extremely bitter personality who seeks to destroy you by informing people about

confidential things, tales, secrets, stories and rumours which he feels will damage you.

A slanderer is a jealous person who hates the success and leadership others have and who goes about intentionally sending malicious information to spread rumours, scandals, and unverifiable stories about people who otherwise have a good reputation.

2. The test of a slanderer is to endure a disgruntled former employee who seeks to destroy his former place of employment by destroying its good image.

A disgruntled former employee-turned-slanderer is usually a low or a poor performer who seeks to justify to the public why he lost his job by spreading false stories about his former employer.

3. The test of a slanderer is to endure a preacher who, instead of preaching and testifying about Jesus, spends his time and effort maliciously sharing shameful and unfortunate news about fellow Christians.

A slanderer's aim is not to win souls, but to inform the church of the mistakes of others so that they can never minister again to anyone. A slanderer has the aim of destroying the ministry of someone who has a good and fruitful ministry by spreading messages on social media, through texts, stories, scandals, and questions about the life, character and ministry of that person. Slanderers attack God's servants by intentionally spreading as much slime and scandalous information about them as possible. This is done to lower people's estimation of God's servants and to therefore, reduce the scope of their ministry.

4. The test of a slanderer is to endure a campaigner who goes around from person to person to convince them of the evil and unacceptable nature of the person they honour.

A slanderer is a smear campaigner. He goes around from house to house with his vitriolic stories and information. A slanderer is a campaigner and he will call person after person diligently to give information he believes will damage the calling and ministry of the one he hates.

5. The test of a slanderer is to endure someone who has lost all power to harm the one he hates, so he resorts to spreading lies, part truths, unverifiable stories and suspicions about God's servant. The slanderer hopes that what he says will damage God's servant.

6. The test of a slanderer is to endure a man who *portrays a church or*

ministry as less acceptable, less commendable, less important and less impressive than **people generally think it is. A** slanderer is someone who attempts to *belittle* ministers of the gospel. A slanderer is someone who wants to *cast the servant of God in a bad light.*

7. The test of a slanderer is to endure someone who *writes, publishes, spreads and circulates malicious and injurious stories* about a person. A slanderer is someone who *attacks another person's character.* The test of a slanderer is to endure someone who *attempts to discredit* and damage God's honoured and anointed servants by speaking and writing against them using insinuations and innuendos.

8. The test of a slanderer is to endure someone who spreads shame. The test of a slanderer is to endure a person who is a spreader of shame. A slanderer is someone who writes or speaks in such a way as to shame and dishonour a person. A slanderer aims to *lower the estimation of* God's chosen servant and *to depreciate the Lord's anointed* in the eyes of the public.

9. The test of a slanderer is to endure someone who *misrepresents you to the general public.* *A slanderer writes and speaks incorrectly, falsely, improperly and unsatisfactorily in order to achieve his aim of hurting you.*

10. The test of a slanderer is to endure someone who *speaks unfavourably* about you even though you are honoured by others. A slanderer does this often in order to make people dislike or disapprove of you.

11. The test of the slanderer is the test of your ability to endure lies and slander without reacting.

> Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He is Christ, a King." SO PILATE ASKED HIM, SAYING, "ARE YOU THE KING OF THE JEWS?" AND HE ANSWERED HIM AND SAID, "IT IS AS YOU SAY."
>
> Luke 23:1-3 (NASB1995)

> And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto

them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

Mark 12:14-17

12. The test of the slanderer is the test of your ability to endure slander without explaining or defending yourself.

And THE CHIEF PRIESTS ACCUSED HIM OF MANY THINGS: BUT HE ANSWERED NOTHING. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

Mark 15:3-5

13. The test of the slanderer is the test of your ability to endure slander without taking revenge. Allow God to avenge you on the slanderer.

LET NOT A SLANDERER BE ESTABLISHED IN THE EARTH; Let evil hunt the violent man to overthrow him.

Psalm 140:11(NKJV)

14. The test of the slanderer is the test of your ability to endure the loss and fallout that comes through slander.

But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; WHAT FURTHER NEED HAVE WE OF WITNESSES? BEHOLD, NOW YE HAVE HEARD HIS BLASPHEMY. WHAT THINK YE? THEY ANSWERED AND SAID, HE IS GUILTY OF DEATH. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands

Matthew 26:60-67

And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. THEN SAID PILATE UNTO HIM, HEAREST

THOU NOT HOW MANY THINGS THEY WITNESS AGAINST THEE? AND HE ANSWERED HIM TO NEVER A WORD; INSOMUCH THAT THE GOVERNOR MARVELLED GREATLY.

Matthew 27:12-14

15. The test of the slanderer is the test of your ability to continue to minister amid the suspicion that has been created by slander. Apostle Paul had lots of evil reports going on around him; but the suspicion created by slander did not matter much to him. He simply continued preaching and travelling.

Giving no cause for offence in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, … by glory and dishonor, BY EVIL REPORT AND GOOD REPORT; REGARDED AS DECEIVERS AND YET TRUE;

2 Corinthians 6:3-4, 8 (NASB1995)

16. The test of the slanderer is the test of your ability to continue to minister amid accusations.

Apostle Paul could continue ministering even though there were a lot of evil reports about him. He was regarded as a deceiver, even though he was speaking the truth. Today, many ministers have to go through the same! You are regarded as a deceiver even though you are preaching the truth.

But [as for me personally] IT MATTERS VERY LITTLE TO ME THAT I SHOULD BE PUT ON TRIAL BY YOU [ON THIS POINT], AND THAT YOU OR ANY OTHER HUMAN TRIBUNAL SHOULD INVESTIGATE AND QUESTION AND CROSS-QUESTION ME. I do not even put myself on trial and judge myself. I am not conscious of anything against myself, and I feel blameless; but I am not vindicated and acquitted before God on that account. It is the Lord [Himself] Who examines and judges me. So do not make any hasty or premature judgments before the time when the Lord comes [again], for He will both bring to light the secret things that are [now hidden] in darkness and disclose and expose the [secret] aims (motives and purposes) of hearts. Then every man will receive his [due] commendation from God.

1 Corinthians 4:3-5 (AMPC)

Why You Must Take Heart as You Endure the Test of the Slanderer

1. Endure slander because God Himself endured the test of the slanderer.

And the beast was given the power of speech, uttering boastful and blasphemous words, and he was given the freedom to exert his authority and to exercise his will for forty-two months (three and a half years). AND HE OPENED HIS MOUTH TO SPEAK SLANDERS AGAINST GOD, blaspheming His name and His abode, [even vilifying] those who live in heaven.

Revelation 13:5-6 (AMPC)

2. Endure slander because Jesus endured the test of the slanderer.

And THOSE WHO PASSED BY BLASPHEMED HIM, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"

Mark 15:29-30 (NKJV)

3. Endure slander because John endured the test of Diotrephes, the slanderer.

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. So when I come, I WILL CALL ATTENTION TO WHAT HE IS DOING, SPREADING MALICIOUS NONSENSE ABOUT US. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church. Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.

3 John 1:9-11 (NIV)

4. Endure slander because Paul endured the test of the slanderer from Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus. Paul described Philetus's words as malignant cancers.

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan THAT THEY MAY LEARN NOT TO BLASPHEME.

1 Timothy 1:18-20 (NKJV)

But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And THEIR MESSAGE WILL SPREAD LIKE CANCER. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort,

2 Timothy 2:16-17 (NKJV)

May God give you victory over all the "senseless nonsense" that is spoken against you by the wicked slanderers of your life!

You will pass the test of the slanderer with flying colours! AMEN!

May the slanderer not be established in the earth!

"And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."
Ecclesiastes 12:12